

FRYTHROGONYS CINCTUS: Gould.



ERYTHROGONYS CINCTUS, *Gould.*

Banded Red-knee.

Erythrogonyx cinctus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 155.—Ib. Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

OVER what extent of country the Banded Red-knee may range is yet to be determined; the south-eastern portions of Australia are the only localities from which, if I recollect rightly, I have ever seen or received specimens.

It is a summer visitor to New South Wales, where it is esteemed a rare bird, and where its presence is probably altogether dependent upon the kind of season that may occur; its natural habits leading it to frequent the borders of lagoons, muddy flats and the banks of rivers, none but wet and humid seasons, which, it is to be regretted, are so unfrequent in Australia, are suitable to it: I believe it is seldom or ever seen either on, or even near the sea-coast, but that it is strictly an inhabitant of the interior. In October and November, 1839, I found it tolerably abundant on the flats near Aberdeen, and on the upper part of Dartbrook, a tributary of the River Hunter, and on visiting the Mokai and Namoi in the following month I observed it to be equally numerous on those rivers. I seldom saw more than two together, and these were almost always male and female: they appeared, as I have before stated, to prefer soft muddy banks to the stony or shingly margins of the rivers, which preference may be attributed to the circumstance of the former yielding a more abundant supply of food. It is a most showy and active little bird, and is so tame that I had not the slightest trouble in shooting as many as I pleased. Its actions and manners are very peculiar, and partake both of those of the Dottrell and the Sandpiper; having the stooping carriage of the former, and the quick bobbing motion of the head and tail of the latter: its olive-green plumage and long tertiaries also ally it to the Sandpipers, while in its large head and eye it approximates to the Dottrell.

The sexes present no variation in the colour or marking of their plumage, neither did I detect any difference in size by which they might be distinguished. Although they were probably breeding at the period of my visit to the above-mentioned localities, I could never discover their eggs, nor could the two intelligent natives accompanying me either aid or give me any information on the subject.

Its food consists of insects of various kinds.

Head, ear-coverts, back of the neck, and chest black; a small patch under the eye, throat, chest, sides of the neck, centre of the abdomen, and under tail-coverts white, the latter spotted with dark brown; back, centre of the wings, and tertiaries olive, tinged with bronzy brown; tips of the secondaries, and the inner webs of the tips of the six contiguous primaries white; rump and two middle tail-feathers olive, the remaining tail-feathers white; flanks chestnut; irides nearly black, with a narrow black eyelash; bill pulpy, pink-red at the base, black at the tip; thigh, knee, and for a quarter of an inch down the tarsus pink-red, the remainder of the tarsus and the toes lively bluish lead-colour.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.